



STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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December 17, 2002
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m

Present: Berger, Bloechle, Fox, Gieschen, Grone, Ham, Hultine, Jelinek, Kolb, LittleBeaver,
Lloyd, Nolan Brown, Rasmussen, Schultz, Shepard, Vavrina

Absent: Christensen, Curry, Sorensen

I. *Public Comment*

II. *Approval of Agenda*

- Additions to the agenda included D. Transition Application Form under New Business

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Fox and seconded by Shepard. Motion passed.

III. *Approval of Minutes from October 15, 2002*

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Jelinek and seconded by Fox. Motion passed.

IV. Director's Report (Frank Lloyd)

1. **State Budget** – The governor's office is recommending a 7.5% cut for Vocational Rehabilitation. There is some concern regarding the funds that could be lost as a result of the federal Maintenance of Effort (MOE) provision that Voc Rehab must maintain. This federal requirement means that if the state funds appropriated to VR does not equal what the state gave VR two years earlier, VR will be penalized by a reduction in federal funds of that amount. A 7.5% cut would put VR just above the MOE amount required so no penalty would be incurred. A 7.5% cut would cost the VR program \$290,614.00 in state funds and \$1,073,770.00 in federal funds for a combined loss to the program of \$1,364,384.00.

Significant cuts in Medicaid that will eliminate or greatly cut disability services are also being discussed. Other programs may attempt to cost shift to Voc Rehab at a time when their funds may also be cut.

2. **Front End Process** – This is the VR process from the time a consumer contacts VR to point when they sign their Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). VR has standardized the process to be more cost effective, make time more effective for staff, and to shorten the time a consumer spends in the system developing an IPE. The process includes several decision points where the consumer determines if they are ready to continue on. The document used in the process, a self exploration workbook, identifies things such as a consumer's strengths, what kinds of jobs they are looking for, interests, priorities, barriers to employment, etc. It takes approximately 2 to 2 1/2 hours to complete the workbook, which can be completed individually or with assistance.

Frank distributed a handout of sample pages from the Self Exploration Workbook, which was written at a 5th grade level. The new process has been piloted in Norfolk, and training is currently being done in all 3 Omaha teams. VR anticipates going statewide in the spring. The intent behind the new process is informed choice for consumers and better customer services. The new process provides a documented uniform way to get people through the process in a time frame that works for them, and give VR an opportunity to provide the best service possible.

3. **Transition Planner** – Jack indicated that he has received positive feedback regarding the transition planner from meetings with Transition Advisory Council, educators, and special education supervisors. The Planner is a guide to arranging Voc Rehab services in schools. A planner form identifying how VR and schools will work together in the area of transition is being completed for all schools that have 20 or more special education students in grade 9-12.

The Making It Work - Students Planning for Success publication is being distributed monthly. It is intended to provide transition information to students with disabilities and their parents about services available to them while they are in high school that can help them plan for their future. Parents, educators, and other interested parties may subscribe over the Web or complete and return a self-addressed postcard to the State or local VR office.

4. **Equitable Service Delivery** – Frank reviewed a memo distributed with the meeting that had been sent to office directors regarding providing a more equitable service delivery system and changing the distribution of VR resources across the state. In reviewing the data on staff to consumer ratio across the state, VR discovered that consumers have access to VR staff and VR case service funds at different rates depending on where they are served. For example, consumers are four times more likely to be served if they live in the Hastings area than a consumer living in Sarpy, Dodge or Washington counties. Part of the plan to provide a more equitable distribution of resources is to close the satellite offices currently open in McCook, Chadron, and O'Neill. The decision is based on the population shift and not due to budget cuts. VR is also evaluating the feasibility of combining the Hastings office with the Grand Island office. The changes may also involve shifting county assignments between district offices. Additionally, VR will be evaluating their service delivery to rural areas and looking for more effective ways to serve consumers.

V. Old Business

- A. Annual Report Update (*Cathy Callaway*)

The report is under construction and will be mailed to council members when completed.

- B. 18-21 Update (*Jack Shepard*)

There has been additional communication between NDE and HHSS regarding who will serve kids once they receive a diploma until they turn age 21. It has been proposed that a committee be created to look at defining the readiness for graduation criteria, standards, what information will be given to IEP teams, etc. Special Education is currently reviewing the proposal and if approved by the Commissioner of Education, funds would be provided for the committee to begin operation.

VI. Report

A. Committee Reports

Strategic Issues Committee – One of the priority areas identified by the committee was to review the changes in demographics across the state. The committee discussed VR's recent response to these changes. A second priority area was to work with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) to encourage strategic planning in areas that relate to employment for persons with disabilities such as housing, work incentives, transportation, etc. The committee will be send a letter to SILC asking them to identify how they are addressing these areas. The committee also discussed looking at economic development opportunities and grants being provided and how VR staff can get involved sooner.

Client Service Delivery – The committee spent time updating new committee members on the function of their committee. They discussed employment warranty and how it's being approached in the VR field offices. Vicki, Don, and Sandy will be getting together before the next meeting to develop questions for the offices regarding their approach to employment warranty.

Interagency/Annual Report – The committee discussed their role in the development of the Annual Report and will be more involved in identifying the stories to be used next year. The customer relations survey for referral sources has been finalized. Don is getting the names and addresses of referral sources from each of the VR offices and will be sending the survey out. When the surveys are returned, the committee will review the data and identify concerns and issues. Jack distributed a chart with information regarding outcomes by referral source.

B. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

The CAP report was distributed with the meeting materials. The council had no questions regarding the report.

The annual CAP report will be finished this week and a copy will be distributed to Executive Committee.

The Brain Injury Association Council will be using the Hotline for Disability Services number as the first point of contact for those with brain injuries to call for resources. The BIA Council is identifying contact people in VR, Special Education, HHS, etc. for the hotline to use as referral sources within the agencies.

C. SILC Report (*Tim Kolb*)

SILC recently obtained their 501(c)3 status and is receiving their funding through a grant from VR and NCBVI. They are now able to seek other grant resources to help fund their activities and are in the process of doing that. They are currently trying to get funding for the Executive Director of the CA SILC to come to NE at the beginning of the legislative session to discuss their experience in passing the CA ADA. SILC has been working on getting similar legislation in NE and will continue to educate legislators. Four SILC members are serving on the Project Advisory Committee to the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant designed to make recommendations for changes to the state infrastructure in an effort to help persons with disabilities get competitive employment.

D. ATP Report (*Mark Schultz*)

The council has received copies of the Tech Works newsletter, which outlines what ATP is doing with the one-stops and their partnership with VR and CBVI. They are currently installing equipment in several locations and hope by the end of January to have 10-12 completed. Eventually 23 will be set up, including the affiliate and comprehensive sites.

The AbilityQuest technology conference is scheduled for May 7-9, 2003 at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln. Vendors related to independent living, housing, employment, ticket to work, and assistive technology will be available.

VII. New Business

A. State Plan and Policy Issues (*Don Crouch*)

Don provided the council with a demonstration of both VR's internal website, and the council links that are available on VR's external website (www.vocrehab.state.ne.us).

B. VR Committee Reports

1. Staff Retention Committee (*Mel Bargas*)

In June, 2001 VR created a committee to look at the issue of staff retention. There has been a great deal of staff turnover, especially in the metro area. From information provided at the exit interview, the committee identified some of the reasons staff were leaving and VR has started to address the reasons. The committee has discussed solutions such as longevity bonuses, management development, and peer mentor training. The committee is meeting in January to continue discussing these and other options. Retention has been better recently, partly because of the economy, and partly because VR has also developed better training and changed some processes.

C. Consumer Feedback (*Deb Jenkins, Lincoln Office*)

Don introduced Deb Jenkins, VR specialist and consumer Sondra Stalnaker. Sondra provided feedback to the council regarding her experiences with VR. She initially worked with VR staff in the North Platte office and then moved to Lincoln and worked with staff in the VR office there. She started with VR in June of 2001, transferred to Lincoln VR in December 2001, and was hired on a job in mid-February, 2002. Sondra was very complimentary of the teamwork and support displayed by VR staff in both offices.

D. Transition Application Form

It was suggested that the VR add a student signature line on the current transition application form being used in the schools. VR will look into the issue.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Shepard and seconded by Schultz. The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.